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Extension Service Staff Conference
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Work of the Emergency War Food Assistants

Reserve

Division of Field Coordination

Our records show that about 1,350 war food assistants are now employed. This large force brings to State directors and State leaders of county extension agents some problems requiring attention throughout the year. The first of these, because many of the assistants have little technical training in agriculture and home economics, is the selection of specific jobs for these workers, then teaching them the subject matter, and aiding them in organizing their work. This responsibility is being met to a high degree in many States, for they recognize that these assistants can be made to be a tremendous force in meeting problems of agricultural production and food conservation. Agricultural agents, particularly because of the press of many war programs, have in recent years not been able to give sufficient time to do a thorough job in demonstrating the practices required for increasing agricultural production under wartime conditions.

One of the Central States is an outstanding example of meeting this need. There, where dairying is a major farm industry, the war food assistants carry on a well-organized program of recommendations that are best adapted to increase milk production, reaching many farmers who have perhaps not been influenced before. They do this through farm visits and with the help of the processors who collect the milk. In work with farm and rural women and boys and girls, war food assistants the country over make home food production, preservation, and conservation an activity that reaches down to the neighborhood level, touching far more homes than was possible heretofore. But they need constant help not only in methods of extension work but also in subject matter.

Despite the press of general extension work, and the temptation to use the assistants in the entire extension field, most county extension agents realize that these assistants should work only in the fields of food production, preservation, and conservation. It should also be understood that these assistants may rightly be used in advancing 4-H Club work--not all lines of club work, but the organization and direction of club work in food production and conservation through volunteer leaders.

There are also many opportunities to employ war food assistants to help urban people with Victory gardening, poultry, home canning and conservation. Organization and teaching procedures in urban areas differ from those in rural communities. Our extension supervisors are more at home in rural territory than in urban centers. Special attention needs to be given to the development of suitable techniques for the use of agents in urban areas.

Many county agricultural and home demonstration agents who have assistants for the first time need help from the State leaders in making best use

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of the new assistants. Despite the fact that the work must be restricted to food production and preservation, we are interested in showing the State and county extension workers how to develop well-rounded programs for the entire year, as well as to maintain good training and direction of the assistants. In the agricultural field, the assistant probably is best used when he is given a definite assignment to concentrate on an organized project, or even campaigns, like the 8-point milk production program, swine management and feeding, special crops, pig, dairy, and poultry clubs, etc., instead of serving as an assistant agent covering the whole run of problems. For all assistants, instruction and direction must be frequent and pointed toward helping everyone to come through successfully with each special assignment or project. The State leaders are doing much through training conferences of war food assistants, but wherever possible these should also be attended by the county extension agents. It is upon these agents that the director and State leaders will have to depend largely, for the leaders in many States with a greatly enlarged force of county workers will not be able perhaps to give enough individual direction and help. Above all, the county extension agents need to help in finding and training local and neighborhood leaders, and in so planning their own method and organization of the work, that both they and the assistants will be able to use organized local leadership effectively.

In war food production and conservation the following items stand out in developing a well-rounded program for the assistants:

1. Home food production -
 - Family food budget.
 - Victory Gardens.
 - Home fruit plantings.
 - Poultry and eggs.
 - Milk.
 - Pork, mutton, rabbits.
 - Cheese.
 - Butter.
2. Canning, preserving -
 - Vegetables.
 - Fruits.
 - Jams.
 - Jellies.
 - Catchup and pickles.
 - Brined vegetables.
 - Drying.
 - Poultry, meat, fish.
 - Curing meats.
 - Sausage making.

3. Farm food production.
 - War crops.
 - Livestock feeding program.
 - Disease control.
 - Improved production practices.
 - Equipment repair.
 - Labor-saving devices and practices.
4. Waste and loss prevention.
 - Rat proofing and control.
 - Insect and disease control, etc.
5. Preparation for and use of frozen-food lockers.
6. Building of home storage cellars and outdoor pits, preserved-food storage shelves.
7. Care, checking, repair of preserving equipment.
8. Organization and direction of small community canning centers.
9. Obtaining surplus food from farms and gardens and canning it for community or home use.
10. Preparation and use of home produced and preserved food.
11. Food needs of the Nation; regulations and policies governing production and allotment; food rationing; conservation of food.
12. Local and area nutritional disease situations brought about by faulty diets, and plans for meeting such problems.
13. Principles, policies, and relationships in extension work.
14. Extension methods and procedures, including organization of local demonstration groups - 4-H Clubs, plans of work, demonstrations, meetings, information reports.

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